

ALVISO MASTER PLAN: A SPECIFIC PLAN FOR THE ALVISO COMMUNITY



**Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
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ALVISO MASTER PLAN: A SPECIFIC PLAN FOR THE ALVISO COMMUNITY

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City of San José
Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement



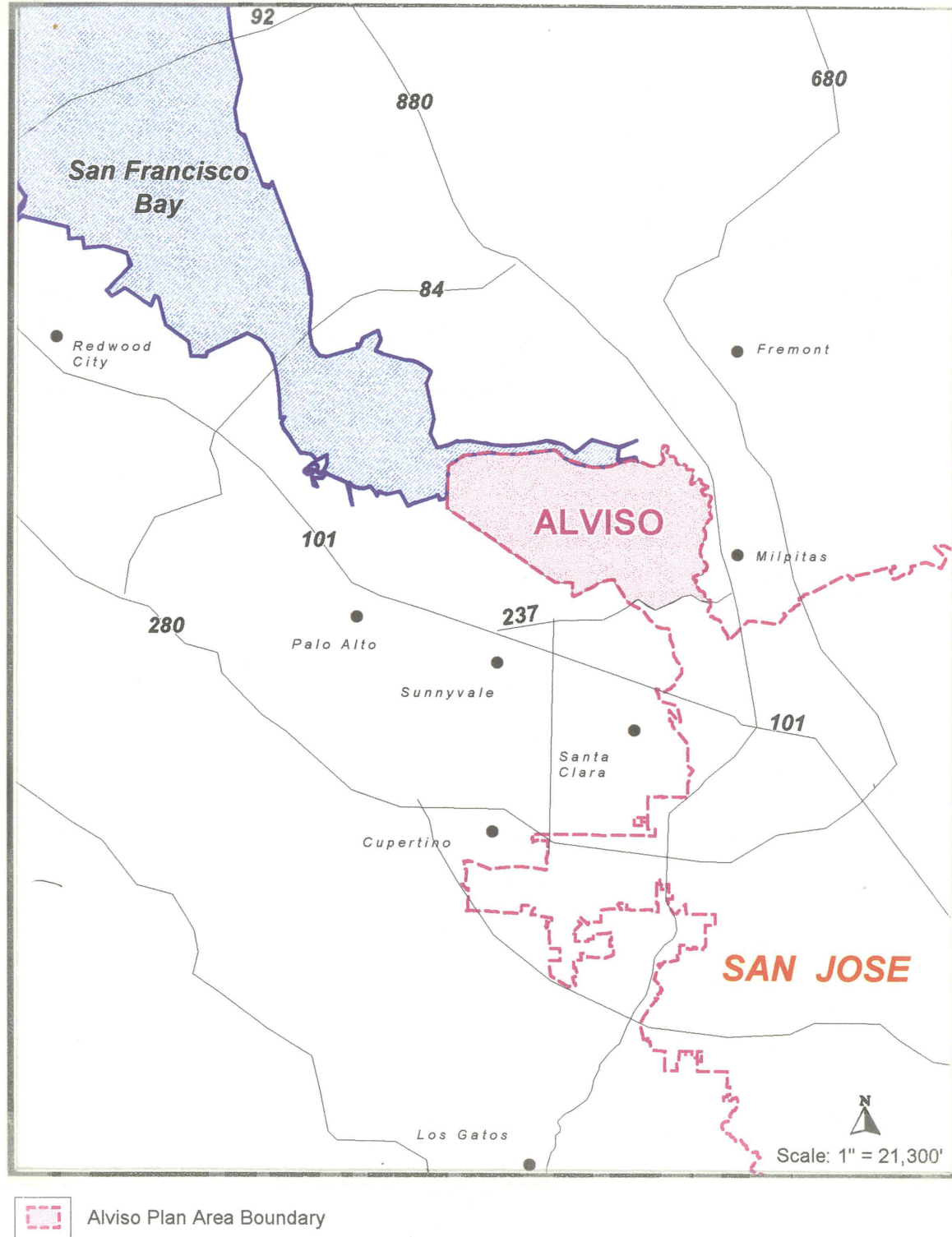
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FIGURE 1. Regional Context



PLAN OVERVIEW



Alviso is a unique bayside community, known for its small town character.

SUMMARY

The Alviso Master Plan: A Specific Plan for the Alviso Community (or simply, the Alviso Master Plan) provides a vision and directs positive changes to a unique area of San José. Located at the very northern edge of San José, Alviso is characterized by its small town atmosphere, rich history, bayside location (San Francisco Bay), wide open spaces, agricultural activities, and a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Alviso has its own distinct sense of place despite its close proximity to the suburban communities and high

technology industrial parks of Silicon Valley (see Figure 1).

The Alviso planning area includes all properties within the City of San José north of Route 237, between the Coyote Creek and the Guadalupe River (see Figure 2). The entire planning area is roughly 10,730 acres. The focus of the Plan is the land located within the Urban Service Area (approximately 2,840 acres) which can be divided into two subareas: the "village" and the larger area.

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The Alviso village area includes the historic western grid, the neighborhood grid, and the lands on both sides of North First Street from Liberty Street to the southern boundary of the George Mayne School (see Figure 3). Existing land uses in the village include single-family residences, some duplexes, triplexes, and small apartment buildings, small grocery stores, restaurants, warehouses, and trucking operations. The village area also contains San José's only yacht club and associated harbor.

The remaining larger area includes the developable properties on both sides of Gold Street, both sides of North First Street south of the George Mayne School, the Nortech Parkway area, and the large expanses of land east of Wilson Way. Existing land uses include the Sunnyside Mobilehome Park, research and development firms, Water Pollution Control Plant, landfills, and agricultural land.

The Alviso Marina County Park, Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and Cargill salt ponds occupy most of the area in Alviso that is outside the Urban Service Area.

The purpose of the Plan is to protect and enhance the small town quality of Alviso by guiding appropriate new development, community facilities, infrastructure, and beautification. By establishing specific goals, policies, and implementation measures, the Plan attempts to resolve the issues of zoning and General Plan inconsistencies, incompatible land uses, insufficient services and facilities, flooding,

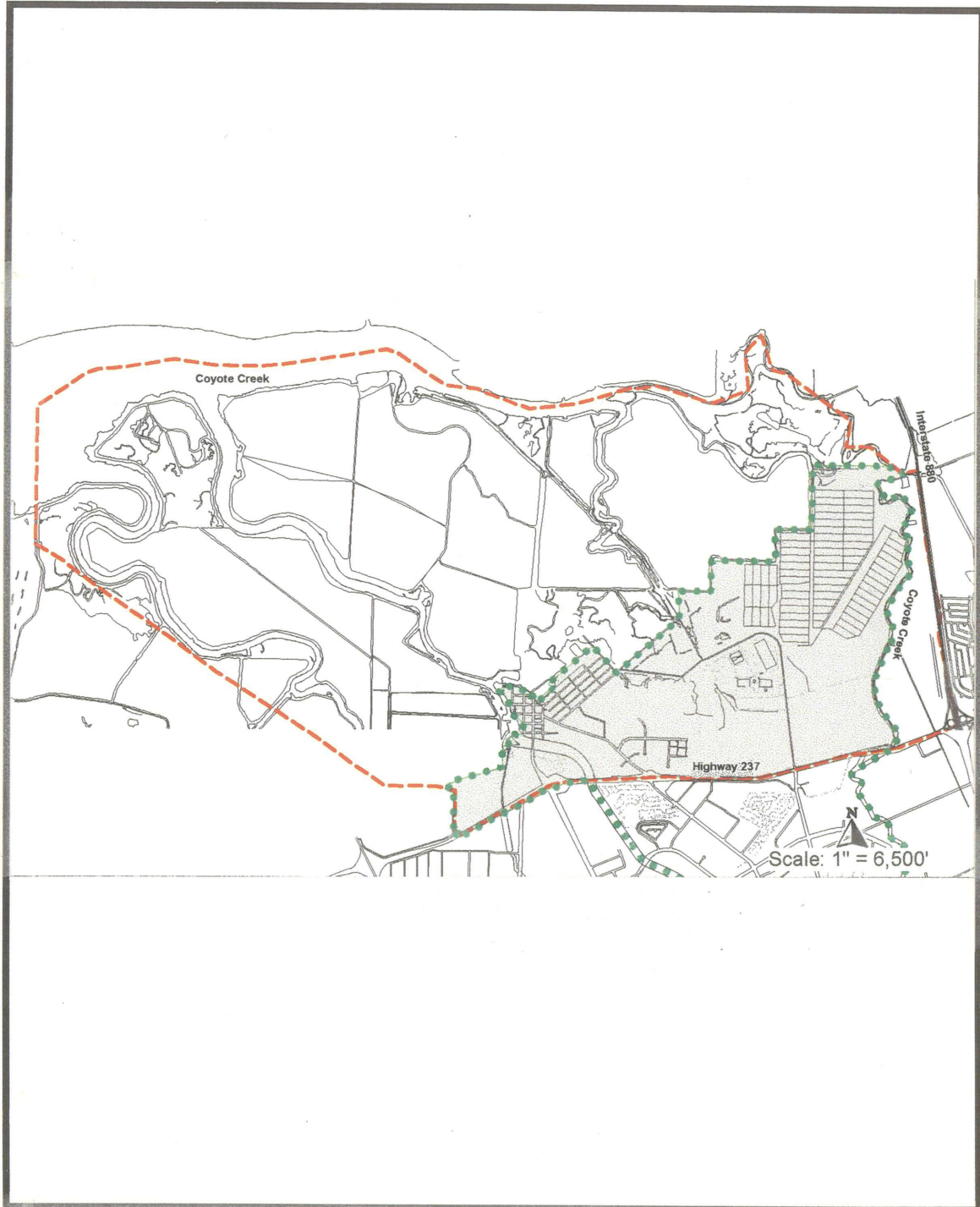
hazardous materials, vegetation and wildlife, soils and geology, cultural resources, truck traffic, air quality, noise from airplanes, economic development, and code enforcement.

The Plan realizes that the full buildout of Alviso will take many years and that it may extend beyond the year 2020; however, it is important to set forth a vision now to avoid piecemeal development and to better respond to potential development pressure within the area.

Specifically, the Alviso Master Plan provides for:

- The retention of the residential neighborhoods located within the village and the opportunity for some new medium density residential uses.
- A mix of residential, commercial, and public uses within the historic core of the village.
- The continuation of light industrial uses north of State Street.
- Opportunities for new industrial parks and combined industrial/commercial ventures near Highway 237.
- The continuation of the Water Pollution Control Plant, its associated activities and buffer lands.
- The continuation of landfill and resource recovery (recycling) activities east of the village.

FIGURE 2. Alviso Planning Area



-  Plan Area Boundary
-  Urban Service Area
(within the Plan Area)

- Opportunities for new community facilities, infrastructure improvements, and other community enhancements.
- An economic development strategy which includes implementation measures for strengthening existing businesses and providing opportunities for the new businesses in Alviso.
- An action plan for implementing the Alviso Master Plan.

SCOPE OF THE SPECIFIC PLAN

As a specific plan, the Alviso Master Plan establishes the location, intensity and character of land uses; the circulation pattern and necessary infrastructure improvements to support development; the location and configuration of parks and community facilities within the area; and the implementation actions required to realize the Plan's objectives. The Master Plan provides detailed policy direction, elaborating upon the *San José 2020 General Plan* which is the principle document governing long term growth and development within the City.

The Alviso Master Plan is incorporated into the *San José 2020 General Plan* as the Alviso Planned Community. The General Plan contains the major features of the Alviso Master Plan including a brief description of the overall intent, permitted land uses, and major policies.

The Alviso Master Plan is intended to be used in conjunction with the City's adopted plans and policies, including,

but not limited to: *San José 2020 General Plan, Residential Design Guidelines, Commercial Design Guidelines, Industrial Design Guidelines, Riparian Corridor Policy Study*, and the *North San José Development Policy*.

An Environmental Impact Report was completed for the Alviso Master Plan in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

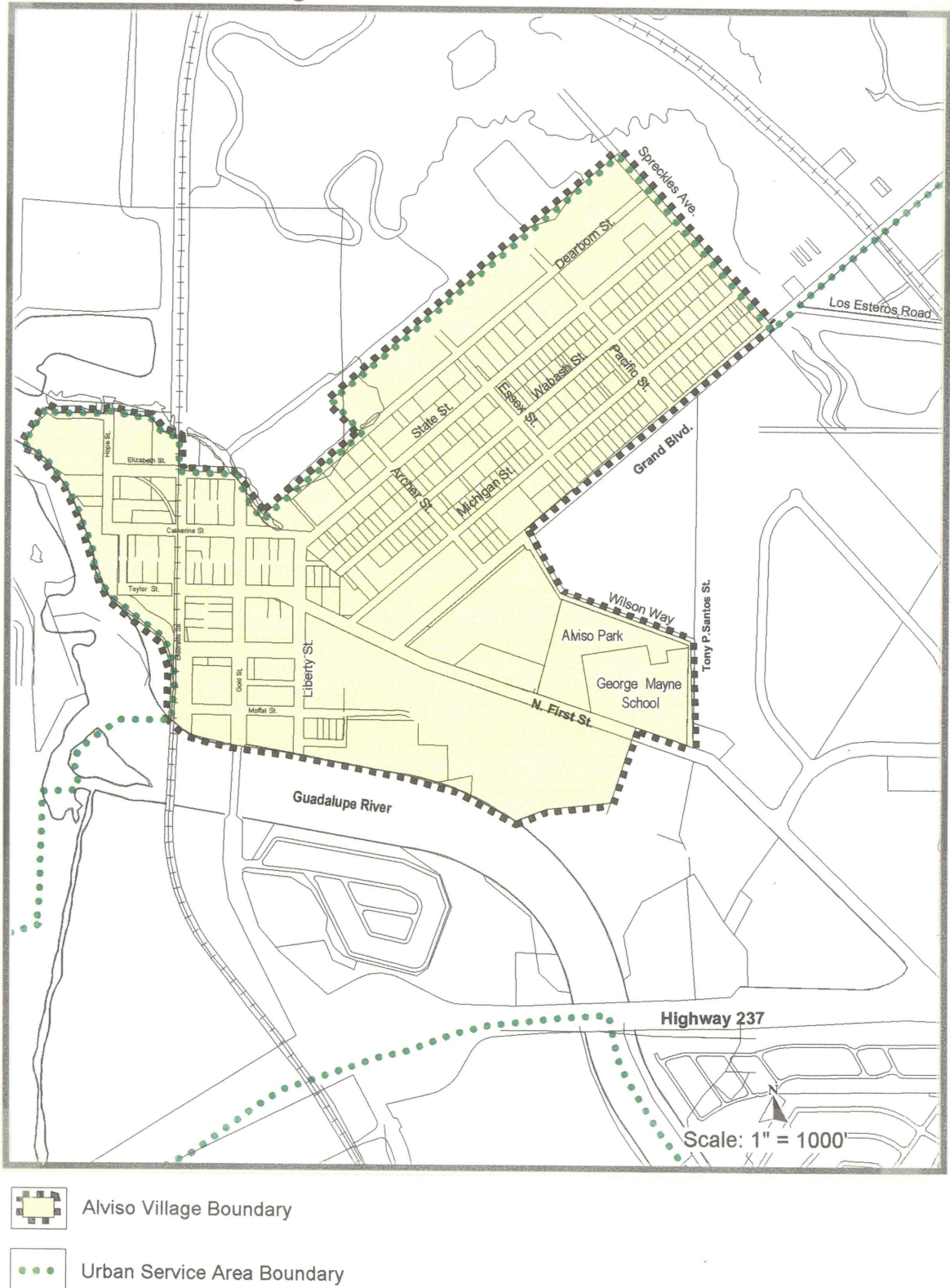
PLANNING APPROACH AND PROCESS

In June 1993, the City Council directed the preparation of the Alviso Master Plan and indicated that one of the Plan's objectives should be to improve the quality of life for Alviso residents while preserving the "small town flavor" of the area.

The planning process for the Alviso Master Plan was initiated in September 1993 when the City Council appointed a 24-member task force to assist in the preparation of the Master Plan. The task force, chaired by Vice Mayor Margie Fernandes, represented Alviso residents, property owners, renters, public and private interest groups, and community-based organizations. Beginning in October 1993, the task force held public meetings to consider the direction of the Master Plan. The larger Alviso community was invited to all task force meetings.

The task force began its work by reviewing and discussing background information concerning land use, community services and facilities, demographics, infrastructure, and

FIGURE 3. Alviso Village



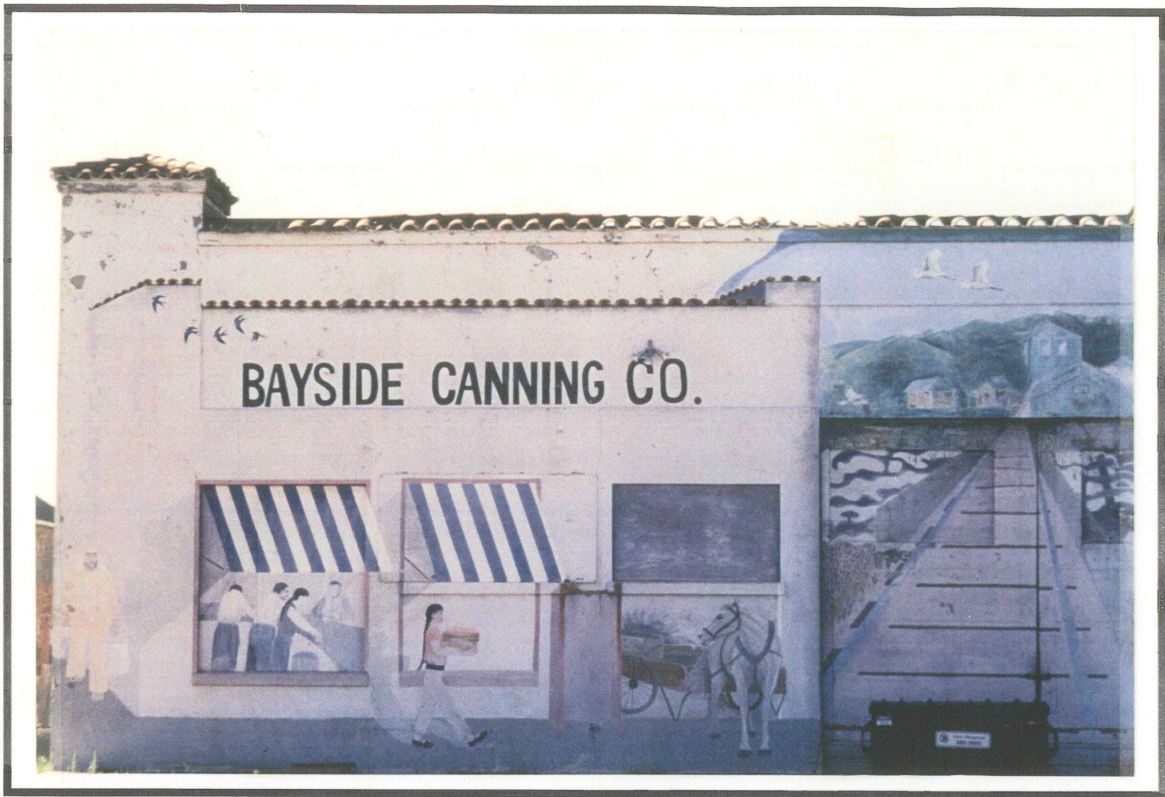
environmental issues. The task force was also briefed by various public agencies and City departments on flooding, the Bay Trail, the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, animal services, and transportation facilities. The task force discussed desired community character and plan objectives while considering the environmental opportunities and constraints in the Alviso area. After evaluating various alternatives, the task force selected a preferred land use alternative which reflected its vision for keeping "the small town character of Alviso." Community meetings were held throughout the planning process to obtain additional input on the development of the Plan.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The Alviso Master Plan is a comprehensive plan seeking to achieve several objectives:

- Retain the small town character, strong community identity, and neighborliness.
- Maintain the existing pattern of residential development.
- Allow for new development at, or at least compatible with, the scale and intensity of existing development within specific subareas.
- Provide adequate infrastructure and services.
- Provide economic development opportunities.
- Celebrate Alviso's history.
- Beautify Alviso.
- Preserve and protect Alviso's strong natural amenities, including the Guadalupe River, Coyote Creek, and baylands.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS



The Bayside Cannery Building is a City Historic Landmark and is located within a National Register Historic District.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Alviso has a rich history. Originally called the Embarcadero de Santa Clara, the waterfront area of Alviso was developed along the Alviso Slough, at the mouth of the Guadalupe River in the San Francisco Bay. The Embarcadero allowed Spanish settlements of the 18th century a landing for the trade of products including cowhide and tallow. The community later earned its name from Ignacio Alviso who obtained a Mexican land grant for the site and its environs known as Rancho de los Esteros. He died in 1848.

The agricultural productivity of Alviso and the Santa Clara Valley created demand for both surface and water transportation to regional and world markets. Alviso, located 35 miles by water from San Francisco and seven miles from San Jose, was ideally situated as a shipping port. Established in 1840, the Port of Alviso was one of the oldest ports on the west coast of the United States. Products shipped during the 19th century included quicksilver from New Almaden, redwood from Los Gatos, and

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produce and grain from Santa Clara Valley.

Alviso was surveyed in 1849, received a city charter in 1852, and was incorporated in 1856, making it one of the first California cities.

In 1849, the first passenger steamboat arrived at Alviso from San Francisco. Regular steamship service was established in 1850. In 1853, the largest steam flour mill in Santa Clara County was built in Alviso. Wharves, fruit evaporators, warehouses, hotels, taverns, stores, and residences flourished during the Gold Rush. In 1858, Guadalupe River access from Alviso to the Bay was enhanced by a channel through the Alviso Slough.

In 1864, the railroad line from San Francisco to San Jose opened and bypassed Alviso, leading to its rapid decline as a major port and a trade center. Shipping by rail was much less expensive than steamship. In 1869, the completion of the transcontinental railroad added to the Port's demise. Only some produce and people continued to travel by water between Alviso and San Francisco. In 1876, Southern Pacific completed its narrow gauge railroad through Alviso and revived the shipping center for local products.

In 1890, the "New Chicago" subdivision carefully laid out 4,000 small lots in Alviso with streets named Dearborn, LaSalle, State, Michigan, Wabash, and others after important streets in Chicago. The majority of the lots were in marshland and never developed.

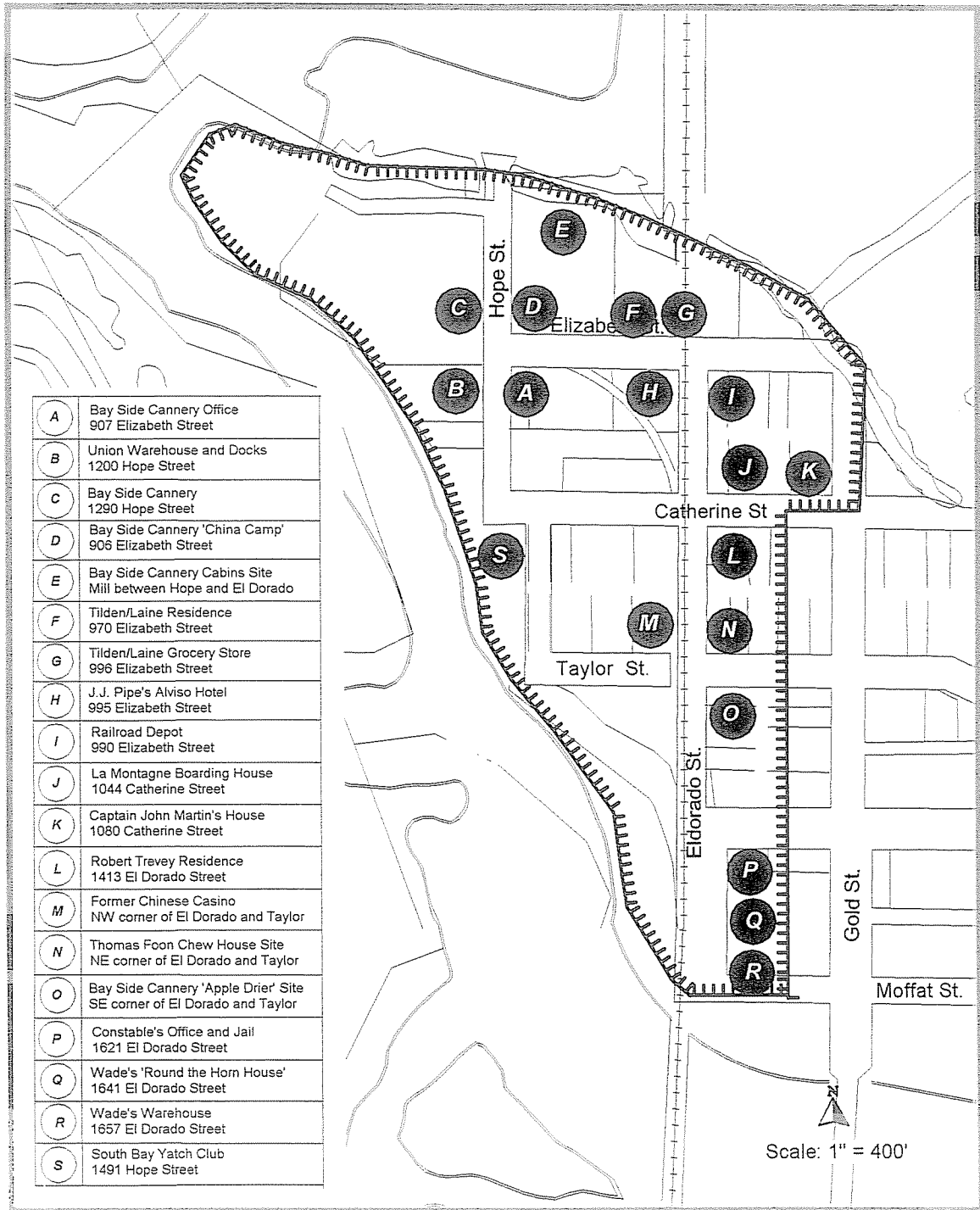
The Bayside Canning Company was established after the 1906 earthquake and became the third largest cannery in California. This company used revolutionary canning practices and employed hundreds of Chinese workers, many of whom lived in company-owned housing near the cannery. The company closed down in 1931 after the death of its owner, Thomas Chew.

Due to its historic significance, the western portion of the Alviso village is listed as a Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places and is a California Point of Historical Interest. The 60-acre Historic District is generally bounded by the Alviso Marina County Park, Guadalupe River/Alviso Slough, Moffat Street, and El Dorado Street. It contains eleven contributing structures and/or sites. Significant structures include Wade's Round the Horn House (1855), the Union Warehouse (1858), Tilden/Laine grocery store and residence (1860 and 1887), LaMontagne Boarding House (1870s), Alviso Railroad Depot (1904), Alviso Yacht Club (1905), and Bayside Cannery (1906) (see Figure 4).

During the late 1950s and into the 1960s, Alviso residents debated about consolidating with the adjacent City of San Jose. Consolidation proponents argued that the City of San Jose had the resources to pave streets and provide other infrastructure improvements to the community. Others were concerned that consolidation would destroy Alviso's unique charm. In 1968, Alviso residents voted by a narrow margin to consolidate with the City of San Jose.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS HISTORIC CONTEXT

FIGURE 4. Historic Resources



National Historic District Boundary

As San Jose's northernmost neighborhood, Alviso remains a small, concentrated community with a mix of residential and non-residential uses. During the last thirty years, Alviso has retained its unique "small town" character, seemingly isolated from surrounding Silicon Valley.

LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION CONTEXT

Alviso is a unique community in the City of San Jose. Unlike other areas of the City, Alviso's physical separation on the north side of Route 237 and its direct proximity to the San Francisco Bay makes it seem more like a small town rather than a part of the third largest city in California.

The Alviso community is made up of a wide variety of different land uses that includes residential, commercial and industrial development (see Figure 5). These different uses are interspersed throughout Alviso, which in part, gives Alviso its unique character.

Along with an intermingling of uses is a sense of place that is unlike any other. Alviso has a strong sense of history and of the natural environment. Alviso is connected to its heritage by the presence of historic structures described above. The Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge is adjacent to the developed areas of the community. This Refuge consists primarily of marshlands, salt ponds, and open water.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operates an environmental education center, located at the end of Grand Boulevard near Artesian Slough.

Because of its location at the Bay's edge on naturally occurring flat marshlands, the views to the Bay and distant hills are generally unobstructed by typical urban development. The structures in Alviso are typically not more than two stories tall and there are vast areas that are currently, open agricultural lands.

There are three main roadways into Alviso; Gold Street, North First Street and Zanker Road/ Los Esteros Road. Gold Street is the westernmost entry to Alviso. Entering Alviso on Gold Street, there is the former Cargill Landfill, miscellaneous industrial storage uses, vacant land, and the Summerset Mobile Home Park. Over the Guadalupe River bridge, Gold Street arrives to the heart of the historic part of Alviso where there are restaurants, some office uses, a few single-family houses, one industrial business, historic buildings, the Alviso Marina County Park, post office, health clinic, fire station, community center, library, and scattered vacant lots.

North First Street links the Alviso village with the modest amount of high technology development currently found along the north side of Highway 237 within the Alviso Planning Area. North First Street then continues south of Highway 237 and connects Alviso with the high technology industrial parks of North San Jose.